

EXHIBIT E

'We failed': Seattle Children's CEO announces 5 more deaths from mold

 king5.com/article/news/local/seattle-childrens-to-keep-10-operating-rooms-closed-through-january-after-mold-is-found

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SEATTLE — Seattle Children's announced on Monday that five more patient deaths are connected to Aspergillus mold found in the hospital. That brings the total to six deaths and 14 infected patients over the last 18 years.

The earlier cases date back to 2001, and were previously considered "isolated" infections. The previous cases are now also linked to mold detected in the hospital's air filtration system.

"At the time we believed these were isolated incidents. We now believe these infections were likely caused by the air handling system that served our operating rooms," Seattle Children's CEO Jeff Sperring said during a press conference Monday. "Looking back we should have made the connection sooner. Simply put, we failed."

Seattle Children's said Monday that the hospital will install a new rooftop air handler and HEPA filters in its operating rooms and adjacent supply areas after the hospital detected mold again.

Its main operating rooms will remain closed through January to complete the installations.

"Patients, families and the community rely on us to provide safe, quality care. We've let them down," Sperring said.

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The hospital closed its main operating rooms on Nov. 13 after mold was detected in three operating rooms and two procedural rooms. The closure allowed Seattle Children's to inspect and clean the air handling system.

This all comes after dangerous levels of mold closed operating rooms on May 24. At that point, it was announced one patient had died and five others had been sickened. Seattle Children's reopened operating rooms on July 4 following a series of inspections.

The current closure will continue through January 2020.

"After careful consideration and consultation with outside experts, we have decided to proceed with the immediate installation of custom in-room HEPA filtration in 10 operating rooms and two equipment storage rooms, and to continue with the planned installation of the new air handling system," Seattle Children's officials said in a statement Friday.

HEPA, or high-efficiency particulate air, filters remove 99.97% of particulates from the air that passes through the filter, according to Seattle Children's.

The room-by-room installation was previously scheduled to be finished in 2020, but officials said they decided to "accelerate" the work. The installation process means 10 of Seattle Children's main operating rooms will have to stay closed through the end of January.

"We are taking this decisive step because it is the best way to protect our patients," Sperring said.

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KING 5 has been investigating the ongoing mold issue and submitted a public records request to obtain a copy of Seattle Children's Reactive Media Statement. The statement revealed the hospital would only reveal information to reporters if asked a specific question.

KING 5 reporter Natalie Swaby asked CEO Jeff Sperring on Monday, "Doesn't that document -- that was drawn up in July 2018 -- show a plan to cover up this mold problem?"

Sperring replied, "Our focus through all of this obviously was with the best information that we had, make the right decision for our kids, improve our systems, and continuously look at what we can do to make that better."

Swaby said, "KING 5 has requested all documents from the public health department, but your legal team has blocked that."

Sperring replied, "I understand that that certainly can cause a challenge when trying to report on these stories. These are our kids. They deserve that privacy."

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Seattle Children's plans to review the factors that led to the current situation, including culture, leadership, and communication.

Officials said surgical cases that must be done at Seattle Children's will be performed in three operating rooms that already have the HEPA filtration system. Staff will also continue to divert some cases to other local hospitals as needed and also perform additional surgeries at Seattle Children's Bellevue Clinic and Surgery Center.

"We know this closure will result in the postponement of many surgeries, and we are sorry for the impact this will have on our patients and families. We are confident this is the safest option for our patients," Seattle Children's officials continued in their statement Friday.

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Editor's note: KING 5 has a working relationship with Seattle Children's.